



CLARK REGIONAL EMERGENCY SERVICES AGENCY

9-1-1 Dispatch Center

Regional Communications Systems - Emergency Management - Emergency Medical Services

Serving Battle Ground, Camas, Clark County, LaCenter, Ridgefield, Vancouver, Washougal, and Yacolt

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 7, 2009
17:41

Contact: Information Officer
(360) 737-1911 ext. 3935 or 3985

Protect your health during flooding and power outages

Vancouver, WA—As Clark County experiences heavy rains and the possibility of flooding, health officials are encouraging residents to stay informed about weather-related events and take precautions to protect their health.

The following topics are explained in more depth on the Washington State Department of Health Web site at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/Topics/weather.htm>.

- **Keep food safe** during power outages. Power outages can affect refrigeration and safe cooking practices. More than 250 diseases can be caused by bacteria found in contaminated raw or undercooked food, such as meat, milk, eggs, fish or shellfish. Proper storage and cooking of these foods can help prevent foodborne illness.
- **If you have any reason to believe your water is unsafe** because of the presence of bacteria or viruses, the best way to purify it is by bringing the water to a rolling boil for at least one minute. You can also purify water by adding liquid chlorine bleach, although bleach will not kill certain parasites such as cryptosporidium. Cloudy water should be filtered first with coffee filters, paper towels, or cheese cloth. Avoid using bleach that contains perfumes, dyes and other additives. Be sure to read the label. Add 1/8 teaspoon of a 5-6 percent liquid chlorine bleach solution per gallon of water, mix thoroughly, and allow to stand for at least 30 minutes before using (60 minutes if the water is cloudy or very cold).
- **Use your generator safely.** Incorrect generator use can lead to carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning from the toxic engine exhaust, electric shock or electrocution and fire. Follow the directions supplied with the generator.

MORE

- **Prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.** Never burn charcoal inside homes, tents, campers, vans, trucks, garages, or mobile homes. Do not burn charcoal in the fireplace in your home. Never use gasoline powered equipment indoors. Never use a gas oven to heat your home, even for a short time. Never idle a car in a garage, even when the garage door is open. Never sleep in a room while using an unvented gas or kerosene heater. Make sure that chimneys and flues are in good condition and are not blocked.
- **Before entering a flooded house or building,** turn off electricity until you are sure there is no danger of electric shock. In case natural gas appliances have been extinguished by high water, turn off gas flow. Buildings and houses that have flooded may contain mold and bacteria that can be harmful to health.
- **Drinking water systems:** Floods pose a particular threat to drinking water systems because floodwaters often carry biological and chemical contaminants that can make consumers sick. If any part of the water distribution system floods, these contaminants can end up at consumer taps. Flooding can cause big problems for people on private wells, too. Monitor private wells closely. If the well floods, assume the water is contaminated with disease-causing bacteria and parasites; switch to bottled or boiled water.
- **Cleaning up a sewage spill:** Thorough cleaning of indoor sewage spills is necessary to protect people – especially small children -- from harmful bacteria and viruses. Cleanup should begin as soon as possible to reduce the risk of exposure to sewage.
- **Mold:** Flooding can create mold problems. Because mold spreads quickly and can damage property and human health, it's important to clean it up quickly.
- **Animal disposal:** As dead animals decompose, bacteria that may normally be contained within the animal's body can be released, exposing people to potential disease-causing pathogens. Scavengers and rodents may be attracted to the carcasses, so it is important to remove the carcass as soon as possible.

###